

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 08177860 1



George Bancroft

7-1 Q
Bacon

New England
AN

ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY

OF THE

CITY OF NEW YORK,

ON

FOREFATHERS' DAY,

DECEMBER 22, 1838.

BY LEONARD BACON,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN NEW HAVEN.

NEW YORK:
EZRA COLLIER.

1839.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1839,
By LEONARD BACON,
In the Clerk's office of the District Court of Connecticut.



NEW YORK, January 11, 1839.

Rev. and Dear Sir—

At the meeting of Board of Officers of the New England Society, on the 28th Dec., 1838, the following Resolution was adopted.

“On motion of Mr. Fessenden, seconded by Mr. Barstow, Resolved,

“That a Committee be appointed to tender the thanks of the Society to the Rev. Leonard Bacon for his Address on the 22d instant, and that a copy of the same be requested for publication.”

I feel myself happy in being selected as the organ of the Society to convey to you the request contained in the above Resolution; and I sincerely hope that the great merit of the Address, and the interesting circumstances under which it was delivered, will induce you to meet the wishes of the Committee.

Absence from the city, and a severe domestic affliction, have necessarily delayed the execution of the trust committed to me until now.

With much esteem,

H. P. PEET.

REV. LEONARD BACON.

NEW HAVEN, 12th Feb., 1839.

Dear Sir—

I have at length found leisure to prepare and submit to your disposal, the copy of the Address which I was called to deliver before the New England Society on the 22d of December last.

You are already aware that the Address consists chiefly of extracts hastily compiled from a volume of Historical Discourses, which at the time of my receiving the invitation to appear before your Society, was already in the press. As your Board of Officers have thought proper to insist on their request, with a knowledge of this fact, I yield to their desire, regretting only that the Address is not more worthy of the occasion and the theme.

Respectfully, &c.

LEONARD BACON.

H. P. PEET, Esq.

A D D R E S S .

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the New England Society :

It would be easy for me to exhaust my time and your patience with preambles and apologies. But I throw myself at once upon your indulgence. In calling me to speak on this occasion, as a New England man, you have called me to the New England privilege of speaking my mind ; and the brief period which the lateness of your invitation has allowed me for preparation, is a pledge that you will receive with kindness the materials of discourse which I have been able to collect, rather than arrange and combine, from among the results of previous studies. If my discourse seems long, you will remember that ‘I have not had time to make it short,’ and will therefore hear me with such patience as becomes the descendants of men who were wont to sit without weariness till the preacher, after the last sands had fallen, turned the hourglass, and entered on the second hour.

First, let us revive our recollections of the causes which led to the settlement of New England, and which gave to the New England colonies a shape, constitution and spirit, altogether peculiar. Afterwards we may proceed to some considerations and statements, tending to exhibit in a just light the character of the founders of New England, and the civil polity which they established.

When America was discovered by the Spaniards, the tropical regions, from Mexico to Brazil, enjoying a climate without any winter, rich in all the natural means of subsistence and enjoyment, abounding in gold and silver and precious stones, adorned in some places with temples and palaces and populous cities, and inhabited by nations whose half-armed effeminacy, could offer no effectual resistance to the strength of European warriors, clad in iron, and equipped with the terrific implements of modern warfare, presented such a field as was never before opened to human rapacity. In a few years, the Spanish monarchy, by invasion and violence, by cruelty and treachery, had become possessed of vast provinces and rich dependent kingdoms in America. Portugal, then one of the most considerable powers of Christendom, had at the same time laid the foundations of her great western empire. What effect the planting of such colonies, founded in rapine, and moulded by the combined influences of Popery in religion and despotism in government, has had on the progress of the world in freedom, knowledge, and happiness, I need not show in detail. Those colonies and conquests poured back indeed upon the parent empires, broad streams of wealth; and Spain and Portugal with their possessions in the west, were for a few short ages the envy of the world. But all prosperity, whether of individuals or of nations, that does not spring from honest industry and from the arts of peace, brings curses in its train. The wealth which Spain and Portugal derived from their possessions in America has been their ruin. And from the hour in which they, weak and paralyzed, were no longer able to retain their grasp upon their American provinces—from the hour in which the various countries from Mexico to Brazil became

independent, what a sea of anarchy has been tossing its waves over those wide realms, so gorgeous with the lavished wealth of nature. It may even be doubted whether there is, at this hour, in Mexico or in Peru, a more stable and beneficent government, or a more numerous, comfortable and virtuous population, than there was before the atrocious conquests of Cortez and Pizarro. What substantial benefit has accrued to the world from the planting of Spanish colonies in America? What, beyond the benefit of having one more illustration, on the grandest scale, of the truth so often illustrated in history, that to nations, as to individuals, the wages of crime is death.

The success of Spain, and the reports of adventurers who came back to Europe enriched with spoils, excited the cupidity of other nations to similar enterprises. England, among the rest, was ambitious to have tributary provinces in the new world, from which gold and gems should come, to fill the treasury of her king, and to augment the riches and splendor of her nobility. One expedition after another was planned and undertaken, in the hope of acquiring some country which should be to England, what Mexico and Peru had been to Spain. And when in consequence of successive and most discouraging failures, such hopes began to be abandoned; and plans of colonization, and cultivation, and rational commerce, had succeeded to dreams of romantic conquest and adventure—when commercial companies with royal grants and charters, actuated by ordinary commercial motives, attempted to establish settlements in North Carolina and Virginia, and upon the bleak coast of Maine, the disappointments and disasters which ensued, demonstrated that another call, and another sort of charter, and other and higher im-

pulses were necessary to success. Commercial enterprise, cheered by royal patronage, and availing itself of the genius of Raleigh and the adventurous energy of Smith, sent forth its expeditions without success. The wilderness and the solitary place would not be glad for them, and it seemed as if the savage was to roam over these wilds forever.

But the fullness of time was advancing. Other causes, the working of which was obvious to all, but the tendency of which no human mind had conjectured, were operating to secure for religion, for freedom, and for science too, their fairest home, and the field of their brightest achievements.

The reformation from Popery, which Wycliffe attempted in the fourteenth century, and for which Huss and Jerome of Prague were martyrs in the fifteenth, was successfully begun by Luther in Germany, and by Zuingli in Switzerland, about the year 1517—twenty five years after the discovery of America. The minds of men having been prepared beforehand, not only by the writings of Wycliffe and the martyrdom of Huss and Jerome, but also by the new impulse and independence which had been given to thought in consequence of the revival of learning then in progress, and by the excitement which the discovery of a new world, and of new paths and regions for commerce, had spread over Europe; and the invention of printing having provided a new instrumentality for the diffusion of knowledge and the promotion of free inquiry—only a few years elapsed from the time when Luther in the university of Wittemberg, and Zuingli in the cathedral of Zurich, made their first efforts, before all Europe was convulsed with the progress of a great intellectual and moral emancipation.

The reformation was essentially the assertion of the right of individual thought and opinion, founded on the doctrine of individual responsibility. Popery puts the consciences of the laity into the keeping of the priesthood. To the priest you are to confess your sins; from him you are to receive penance and forgiveness; he is to be responsible for you, if you do as he bids you; to him you are to commit the guidance and government of your soul, with implicit submission. Life and immortality are only in the sacraments which he dispenses; death and eternal despair are in his malediction. You are to do what he enjoins; you are to believe what he teaches; he is accountable to God—you are accountable to him. The reformation, on the contrary, puts the Bible into every man's hand, and bids him believe, not what the priesthood declares, not what the Church decrees, but what God reveals. It tells him, Here is God's word; and for your reception or rejection of it, you are individually and directly accountable to God. Thus it was that from the beginning—though princes and statesmen did not always so regard it—the cause of the reformation was every where essentially the cause of freedom; of manly thought, and bold inquiry; of popular improvement; of universal education. When religion, instead of being an affair between man and his priest, becomes an affair between man and his God; the dignity of man as man at once outshines the dignity of pontiffs and of kings. By the doctrine of the reformation, men though fallen and miserable in their native estate, are yet, in the estate to which they are raised as redeemed by Christ, as emancipated by the truth, and as anointed by the Holy Spirit—"kings and priests unto God."

In England—always to be named with reverential affection as the father-land of our fathers—the seeds of truth and spiritual freedom, sown by Wycliffe a hundred and fifty years before Luther's time, were never entirely extirpated. And when Germany and Switzerland began to be agitated with the great discussions of the reformation, men were soon found in England, who sympathized with the reformers, and secretly or openly adopted their principles. But in that country, peculiar circumstances gave to the reformation of the national Church a peculiar form and aspect.

The English king at that period, was Henry VIII. He was, for a prince, uncommonly well educated in the scholastic learning of the age; and not long after the commencement of the reformation, he signalized himself, and obtained from the Pope the honorary title of "Defender of the Faith," by writing a Latin volume in confutation of the heresies of Luther. But afterwards, wishing to put away his wife on account of some pretended scruple of conscience, and not being able to obtain a divorce by the authority of the Pope, who had strong political reasons for evading a compliance with his wishes, he quarreled with the Pope, (1529,) and began to reform after a fashion of his own. Without renouncing any doctrine of the Romish Church, he declared the Church of England independent of the see of Rome; he assumed all ecclesiastical power into his own hands, making himself head of the Church; he confiscated the lands and treasures of the monasteries; he brought the bishops into an abject dependence on his power; he exercised the prerogative of allowing or restraining at his pleasure the circulation and use of the Scriptures; and, with impartial fury, he persecuted those who adhered to the Pope, and those who abjured

the errors of Popery. The religion of the Church of England, under his administration, was Popery, with the king for Pope.

During the short reign of Edward IV, (1547,) or rather of the regents who governed England in his name, the king himself being under age, the reformation of the English Church was commenced with true good will, and carried forward as energetically and rapidly as was consistent with discretion. Thus when the bloody Queen Mary succeeded to the throne, (1553,) and attempted to restore, by sword and faggot, the ancient superstition, hundreds were found who followed the protomartyr Rogers, and like him sealed their testimony at the stake; and hundreds more, of ministers and other intelligent and conscientious men, having the opportunity of flight, found refuge for a season in the various Protestant countries of the continent. At the places at which these exiles were hospitably received, and particularly at Geneva, they became familiar with forms of worship, and of discipline, more completely purified from Popery, as they thought, than the forms which had as yet been adopted or permitted in their native country. Among the English exiles in the city of Frankfort, who had the privilege of uniting in public worship in their own language, there arose a difference of opinion. Some were for a strict conformity of their public services to the order which had been established in England under king Edward, while others considered themselves at liberty to lay aside every thing which savored of superstition, and to imitate the simplicity which characterized the reformed Churches around them. These were denominated by their adversaries, "Puritans;" and the dispute at Frankfort in the year 1554, is commonly regarded by historians as marking the beginning of the Puritan party.

When the reign of Queen Elizabeth commenced, (1558,) the exiles returned, expecting that a princess educated in the Protestant faith, whose title to the throne was identified with the Protestant cause, would energetically carry forward the reformation which had been begun under the reign of her brother, but which by his premature death had been left confessedly imperfect. This expectation was disappointed. The new Queen was more the daughter of Henry than the sister of Edward. She seemed to dislike nothing of Popery but its inconsistency with her title to the throne, and its claims against her ecclesiastical supremacy.

Those ministers who, in any particular, neglected to conform to the prescribed ceremonies and observances, were called "Non-conformists;" and though their non-conformity was sometimes connived at by this or that more lenient bishop, and sometimes went unpunished because of the danger of exciting popular odium, every such minister was always liable to be suspended or silenced; and many of them, though the ablest and most efficient preachers in the kingdom, at a time when not more than one out of four of the clergy could preach at all,* were forbidden to preach, and were deprived of all their employments.

The Puritans, it will be remembered, were not a secession from the Church of England; they were only that party within the Church, which demanded a more thorough reformation. Their hopes as a party were kept alive, not only by the consciousness that the force of argument was on their side, with no inferiority in respect to talents and learning; but partly by the growing popularity of their opinions; partly by the favor of

* Hallam, Constitutional History of England, I, 270.

those politic and far-seeing statesmen, who, so far as the Queen's willfulness would permit, controlled her government by their counsels; and partly by the prospect that the Queen's successor on the throne might be himself a Puritan.

James Stuart, King of Scotland, became King of England on the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603. As he had reigned over a kingdom thoroughly reformed, and had been educated under influences favorable to the simplest and strictest forms of the Protestant religion, and had often professed in the most solemn manner a hearty attachment to those forms, it was hoped, notwithstanding his known instability of character and his fondness for the pomp and forms of kingly power, that he might be inclined to bring the ecclesiastical state of England, in its discipline and worship, nearer the pattern of the reformed Churches. Accordingly while he was on his way to the metropolis of his new kingdom, he was met with a petition signed by more than eight hundred ministers of the Church of England, praying for the reformation of certain particulars in worship and discipline, but not aimed at all against the principle of prelacy, or the principle of prescribed forms of public prayer. Not one of the least of these requests was granted; on the contrary, the Puritans soon found that the chances of hereditary succession had placed over them as their king, a low minded, vainglorious, pedantic fool, to whom the more than oriental adulation with which courtly prelates fawned upon him, was dearer than the honor of God and the welfare of the people. A specimen of what they might expect under his reign was given, in the imprisonment of ten of the ministers who had presented the reasonable and moderate petition for reform—the offense of presenting such

a petition having been declared in the Star-chamber to be "fineable at discretion, and very near to treason and felony, as it tended to sedition and rebellion,"*—a precedent which, it may be hoped, will not be imitated in these days.

From such persecution, pious and resolute men who loved liberty and purity even more than they loved their native soil, soon began to retreat into other countries. Some had begun to separate themselves professedly from the Church of England, as despairing of its reformation, and to organize themselves independently of the civil state, framing their ecclesiastical institutions according to their own understanding of the word of God. A small congregation of such persons, "finding by experience that they could not peaceably enjoy their own liberty in their native country," removed with their families from the north of England into Holland, and in the year 1610 settled themselves in the city of Leyden; "and there," in the language of one of them, "they continued divers years in a comfortable condition, enjoying much sweet society and spiritual comfort in the ways of God;" "having for their pastor Mr. John Robinson, a man of a learned, polished and modest spirit, pious, and studying of the truth, largely accomplished with spiritual gifts and qualifications to be a shepherd over this flock of Christ; having also a fellow helper with him in the eldership, Mr. William Brewster, a man of approved piety, gravity and sincerity, very eminently furnished with gifts suitable to such an office."†

This little Church, after a few years' residence in Holland, finding that in the city of strangers where

* Hallam, I, 406.

† Morton's Memorial.

they were so hospitably received, they labored under many disadvantages, especially in regard to the education of their children, and moved also by "a great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancement of the kingdom of Christ;" "yea, although they should be but as stepping stones unto others for the performance of so great a work,"—determined on a removal to America; and on the 22d of December, 1620, one hundred of the Leyden pilgrims, including men, women, and little children, landed from the Mayflower, on the rock of Plymouth. Then first the ark of God rested upon the soil of New England, and made it "holy ground." Let the annual return of that wintry day be bright in the hearts of the sons of New England,

"Till the waves of the bay, where the Mayflower lay,
Shall foam and freeze no more."

Meanwhile the Puritans in England were striving and suffering in vain. Reluctant, for the most part, to admit the idea of separation from the national Church, they waited and prayed, and struggled to obtain a more perfect reformation. Their cause grew in favor with the people and with the Parliament, for it was felt to be the cause of Protestantism, of sobriety and godliness, and of civil liberty. But the monarch, and those dependent creatures of the monarch, the prelates, appointed by his pleasure, and accountable to him alone, were steady in the determination to have no reform and to enforce submission. Five years after the settlement of Plymouth, King James was succeeded by his son Charles I, who with more gravity and respectability of personal character than belonged to his father, pur-

sued the same despotic policy, in the Church, and in the civil state, which made his father odious, as well as contemptible. His principal adviser was William Laud, a narrow minded and bitter enemy of all who desired any farther reformation in ecclesiastical discipline, a systematic corrupter of the established doctrines of the Church, a superstitious promoter of pomp and ceremony in religion, more a friend to Rome than to Geneva or to Augsburg, a hater of popular rights and of the ancient liberties and common law of England, and the constant adviser of all arbitrary methods of government. This man, being made bishop of London, and afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, and having the king almost absolutely under his control, brought the despotic powers of the Star-chamber and of the High Commission Court to bear with new terrors, not only upon non-conforming clergymen, but upon men of other professions who dared to express an opinion in favor of reformation.

In these circumstances, the same spirit that had led the Pilgrims of Leyden to Plymouth, led others, in greater numbers, and with more adequate means, to attempt the establishment of religious colonies in America. Eight years after the settlement of Plymouth, the colony of Massachusetts Bay was commenced by Endicott and his company at Salem; and in 1630, Boston and the surrounding towns were occupied by the illustrious Winthrop and the hundreds of emigrants who followed him. In 1635, the first beginnings were made on the Connecticut river, at Hartford and at Saybrook; in 1636, Roger Williams opened at Providence his "refuge for all sorts of consciences;" and in 1638, another independent colony was commenced at New Haven.

Thus it was that New England was planted. The planting of North America upon merely mercenary and selfish principles had been attempted once and again, and had failed. Our fathers and predecessors came under the influence of higher motives, and of a holier inspiration. They came, actuated by a great and sublime idea,—an idea from the word and mind of God,—an idea that made them courageous to attempt, wise to plan, strong to suffer, and dauntless to persevere. Their souls were exalted to a perception of the grandeur of their undertaking and of the vast results that were suspended on its success. They were inspired by a living sympathy with the designs of that Almighty providence, which led them into this boundless wilderness, that for them the wilderness and the solitary place might be glad, and the desert rejoice abundantly with joy and singing. Thus they could write upon their banners those words of Puritan faith and devotion, “In God we hope,” “He who transplanted us, sustains us.”

Two points in the civil polity instituted by the founders of the several New England colonies, have been the subjects of sharp censure, and of ridicule not always quite so sharp, on the part of those who have not duly considered the character of that age, and the circumstances in which that polity was instituted. I refer here to these two principles—first, that in the choice of magistrates, the making and repealing of laws, the dividing of inheritances, and the deciding of differences, all should be governed by the rules held forth in Scripture; and, secondly, that a man’s Christian character, certified by the Church in the fact of his being a church member, should be essential, not to his enjoying civil rights and privileges, but to his exercising civil power. The adoption of such principles as the basis of their

civil polity, is considered as proving beyond all dispute that the New England colonists were ignorant bigots and wild fanatics.

If you believe the Bible to be a perfect rule of moral action, you are precluded from taking any exception against the first of these principles, as it has just been stated in the words of an ancient record. If you do not believe in the Bible as a rule of moral action, I confess I am not careful at present to answer you at all in this matter. The principle as it stands is simply that Christianity—the ethics of Christianity, should be the constitution of the commonwealth, the supreme law of the land.

But give the principle another construction. Take it as it is commonly understood, and as it was actually applied in practice. In 1644, it was ordered by the General Court of the New Haven jurisdiction, (and the same principle was acted upon in the other colonies,) “that the judicial laws of God as they were delivered by Moses, and as they are a fence to the moral law, being neither typical nor ceremonial, nor having any reference to Canaan, shall be accounted of moral equity, and generally bind all offenders, and be a rule to all the courts in this jurisdiction in their proceedings against offenders, till they be branched out into particulars hereafter.” Take this adoption of the civil laws of the Hebrew commonwealth, about which malicious hearts and shallow brains have so employed their faculties; and what is there in this, that should make us ashamed of our fathers?—what that proves them to be fanatics or bigots?

Remember now that, situated as they were, they must adopt either the laws of England or some other known system. A system entirely new, they could

not frame immediately. Should they then adopt the laws of England as the laws of their young republic? Those were the very laws from which they had fled. Those laws would subject them at once to the king, to the parliament, and to the prelates, in their several jurisdictions. The adoption of the laws of England would have been fatal to the object of their emigration. Should they then adopt the Roman civil law, which is the basis of the jurisprudence of most countries in Europe? That system is foreign to the genius of Englishmen, and to the spirit of freedom, and besides, was unknown to the body of the people for whom laws were to be provided. What other course remained to them, if they wished to separate themselves from the power of the enemies who had driven them into banishment, and to provide for a complete and vital independence, but to adopt at once a system of laws which was in every man's hand, which every man read, and as he was able, expounded in his family, and with which every subject of the jurisdiction could easily be made familiarly acquainted.

But what was there of absurdity in this code, considered as a code for just such a settlement as this was? Where are we, that we need raise such a question? Is it in a Christian country, that the question must be argued, whether the Mosaic law, excluding whatever is typical, or ceremonial, or local, is absurd, as the basis or beginning of a system of jurisprudence? Suppose the planters of the New England colonies had taken as their rule, in the administration of justice, the laws of Solon, or Lycurgus, or the laws of the twelve tables: suppose the agreement had been, that the laws of King Alfred should be followed in the punishment of offenders, in the settlement of controversies between individ-

uals, and in the division of estates:—where had been the absurdity? Who will tell us, that the laws of Moses are less wise or equitable than the laws of any other of the legislators of antiquity?

The laws of Moses were given to a community emigrating from their native country, into a land which they were to acquire and occupy, for the great purpose of maintaining in simplicity and purity the worship of the one true God. The founders of New England came hither for the self-same purpose. Their emigration from their native country was a religious emigration. Every other interest of their community was held subordinate to the purity of their religious faith and practice. So far then as this point of comparison is concerned, the laws which were given to Israel in the wilderness may have been suited to the wants of a religious colony planting itself in America.

The laws of Moses were given to a people who were to live not only surrounded by heathen tribes on every frontier save the seaboard, but also with heathen inhabitants, worshipers of the devil, intermixed among them, not fellow citizens, but men of another and barbarous race; and the laws were therefore framed with a special reference to the corrupting influence of such neighborhood and intercourse. Similar to this was the condition of our fathers. The Canaanite was in the land, with his barbarian vices, with his heathenish and hideous superstitions; and their servants and children were to be guarded against the contamination of intercourse with beings so degraded.

The laws of the Hebrews were designed for a free people. Under those laws, so unlike all the institutions of oriental despotism, there was no absolute power, and, with the exception of the hereditary priesthood, whose

privileges as a class were well balanced by their labors and disabilities, no privileged classes. The aim of those laws was "equal and exact justice;" and equal and exact justice is the only freedom. Equal and exact justice in the laws, and in the administration of the laws, infuses freedom into the being of a people, secures the widest and most useful distribution of the means of enjoyment, and affords scope for the activity, and healthful stimulus to the affections, of every individual. The people whose habits and sentiments are formed under such an administration of justice, will be a free people.

But it is worth our while to notice two of the most important effects of their renouncing the laws of England, and adopting the Mosaic law. In the first place, the principle on which inheritances were to be divided, was materially changed. The English law, except where some local usage prevails to the contrary, gives all real estate to the eldest son. This is the pillar of the English aristocracy. Let this one principle be taken away; let estates, instead of passing undivided to a single heir, be divided among many heirs, and that vast accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few great families is at an end. But the Jewish law divides inheritances among all the children, giving to the eldest son, as the head of the family, only a double portion. This promotes equality among the people, breaking up the rich man's great estate into as many portions as he has children, and thus insuring the constant division and general distribution of property. How different is the aspect of this country now, from what it would have been, if the feudal law of inheritance had been from the beginning the law of the land! How incalculable has been the effect on the character of the people!

Notice in the next place, how great a change in respect to the inflicting of capital punishments, was made by adopting the Hebrew laws, instead of the laws of England. By the laws of England, not far from one hundred and fifty crimes were at that time punishable with death. By the laws which the New England colonists adopted, this bloody catalogue was reduced to eleven.* On such a difference as this, it would be idle to expatiate. In determining what kind of men our fathers were, we are to compare their laws, not with ours, but with the laws which they renounced. The greatest and boldest improvement which has been made in criminal jurisprudence, by any one act, since the dark ages, was that which was made by our fathers, when they determined, "that the judicial laws of God, as they were delivered by Moses, and as they are a fence to the moral law, being neither typical, nor ceremonial, nor having any reference to Canaan, shall be accounted of moral equity, and generally bind all offenders, and be a rule to all the courts." Whatever improvements in this respect we have made since their day, may be resolved into this:—We have learned to distinguish, better than they, between that in the laws of Moses which was of absolute obligation, being founded on permanent and universal reasons only, and that which was ordained in reference to the peculiar circumstances of the Hebrew nation, and which was therefore temporary or local.

So much for the first principle in the constitution adopted by the fathers of New England, namely, the

* Murder, Treason, Perjury against the life of another, Kidnapping, Bestiality, Sodomy, Adultery, Blasphemy in the highest degree, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Rebellion against parents.

principle that the Bible should be their rule of justice. As to the other principle, namely, that political power should be committed only to those men whose moral character, and whose sympathy with the great design of the plantation, should be certified by their being members of the Church,—one simple fact which the fathers knew right well, is its only vindication as a political measure. They knew that as soon as they should have built their houses and got their lands under cultivation, as soon as they should have enough of what was taxable and titheable to excite covetousness, the king would be sending over his needy profligates to govern them, and the archbishop his surpliced commissaries to gather the tithes into his storehouse. Knowing this, they were resolved to leave no door open for such an invasion. They came hither to establish a free Christian commonwealth; and, to secure that end, they determined, that in their commonwealth, none should have any civil power, who either would not, or could not, enter at the door of church fellowship. “They held themselves bound,” they said, “to establish such civil order as might best conduce to the securing the purity and peace of the ordinances to themselves and their posterity.” Was this fanatical? Was this bigoted? Place yourself in their circumstances, with their convictions of the importance of truth, simplicity, and purity, in the worship of God; and say what you could do more rational or more manly? If we are to regard this provision as a measure for the encouragement or promotion of piety, undoubtedly it must be pronounced a great mistake. Piety is not to be promoted by making it the condition of any civil or political distinctions. This they knew as well as we; and when they introduced the principle in question, it was not for the sake of bestowing hon-

ors or privileges upon piety, but for the sake of guarding their liberty and securing the end for which they had made themselves exiles. If you call their adoption of this principle fanaticism, it is to be remembered that the same fanaticism runs through the history of England. How long has any man in England been permitted to hold any office under the crown, without being a communicant in the Church of England? The self-same fanaticism had, up to that time, characterized all nations, protestant or popish, Mohammedan or heathen; nay, as Davenport said, "these very Indians, that worship the devil," acted on the same principle, so that in his judgment "it seemed to be a principle imprinted in the minds and hearts of all men in the equity of it."* Call it fanaticism if you will. To that fanaticism which threw off the laws of England, and made these colonies Puritan commonwealths, we are indebted for our existence as a distinct and independent nation.

But after all, we may be told, these fathers of ours were Puritans; and this connection between the New England fathers and that fanatical party in their native country, shows what they were. Thus we come to another topic. Well, what and who were the Puritans? Need any man be ashamed of being descended from such ancestors?

There are those whose ideas of the Puritans are derived only from such authorities as Butler's *Hudibras*, Scott's romances, and similar fictions. There are those, still more unfortunate, who form their opinion of the character of the Puritans from what they read in such works as that most unscrupulous and malicious of lying

* Discourse about Civil Government, 24.

narratives, Peters's History of Connecticut. With persons whose historical knowledge is of this description, it would be a waste of time to argue. But those who know any thing of the history of England, may easily disabuse themselves of vulgar prejudices against the Puritans.

What were the Puritans? The prejudices which have been infused into so many minds from the light, popular literature of England since the restoration, are ready to answer. The Puritans!—every body knows what they were;—an enthusiastic religious sect, distinguished by peculiarities of dress and language, enemies of learning, haters of refinement and all social enjoyments, low-bred fanatics, crop-eared rebels, a rabble of round-heads, whose preachers were cobblers and tinkers, ever turning their optics in upon their own inward light, and waging fierce war upon mince pies and plum puddings. It was easy for the courtiers of King Charles II, when the men of what they called “the Grand Rebellion,” had gone from the scene of action, thus to make themselves merry with misrepresentations of the Puritans, and to laugh at the wit of Butler and of South; but their fathers laughed not, when, in many a field of conflict, the chivalry of England skipped like lambs, and proud banners rich with Norman heraldry, and emblazoned with bearings that had been stars of victory at Cressy and at Poitiers, were trailed in dust before the round-head regiments of Cromwell.

What were the Puritans? Let sober history answer. They were a great religious and political party, in a country and in an age in which every man's religion was a matter of political regulation. They were in their day the reforming party in the church and state of England. They were a party including, like all

other great parties, religious or political, a great variety of character, and men of all conditions in society. There were noblemen among them, and there were peasants; but the bulk of the party was in the middling classes, the classes which the progress of commerce and civilization, and free thought, had created between the degraded peasantry and the corrupt aristocracy. The strong holds of the party were in the great commercial towns, and especially among the merchants and tradesmen of the metropolis. There were doubtless some hypocrites among them, and some men of unsettled opinions, and some of loose morals, and some actuated by no higher sentiment than party spirit, but the party as a whole was characterized by a devoted love of country, by strict and stern morality, by hearty fervent piety, and by the strongest attachment to sound, evangelical doctrines. There were ignorant men among them, and weak men; but comparing the two parties as masses, theirs was the intelligent and thinking party. There were among them some men of low ambition, some of a restless, envious, leveling temper, some of narrow views; but the party as a whole, was the patriotic party, it stood for popular rights, for the liberties of England, for law against prerogative, for the doctrine that kings and magistrates were made for the people, and not the people for kings—ministers for the Church, and not the Church for ministers.

Who were the Puritans? Enemies of learning did you say? You have heard of Lightfoot, second in scholarship to no other man, whose researches into all sorts of lore are even at this day the great store-house from which the most learned and renowned commentators, not of England and America only, but of Germany, derive no insignificant portion of their learning.

Lightfoot was a Puritan.* You may have heard of Theophilus Gale, whose works have never yet been surpassed for minute and laborious investigation into the sources of all the wisdom of the Gentiles. Gale was a Puritan. You may have heard of Owen, the fame of whose learning, not less than of his genius and his skill, filled all Europe, and constrained the most determined enemies of him, and of his party, to pay him the profoundest deference. Owen was, among divines, the very head and captain of the Puritans. You may have heard of Selden, the jurist, the universal scholar, whose learning was in his day, and is even at this day, the "glory of the English nation." Selden was a Puritan.† Strange that such men should have been identified with the enemies of learning.

The Puritans triumphed for a while. They beat down not only the prelacy, but the peerage, and the throne. And what did they do with the universities? The universities were indeed revolutionized by commissioners from the Puritan Parliament; and all who were enemies to the Commonwealth of England, as then established, were turned out of the seats of instruction and government. But were the revenues of the universities confiscated?—their halls given up to pillage?—their libraries scattered and destroyed? Never were the universities of England better regulated, never did they better answer the legitimate ends of such institutions, than when they were under the control of the Puritans.

Who were the Puritans? Enemies, did you say, of literature and refinement? What is the most resplen-

* Lightfoot was a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. After the restoration, he conformed to the Established Church.

† Selden was one of the lay members of the Westminster Assembly.

dent name in the literature of England? Name that most illustrious of poets, who for magnificence of imagination, for grandeur of thought, for purity, beauty, and tenderness of sentiment, for harmony of numbers, for power and felicity of language, stands without a rival. Milton was a Puritan.

Who were the low-bred fanatics, the crop-eared rebels, the rabble of round-heads? Name that purest patriot whose name stands brightest and most honored in the history of English liberty, and whose example is ever the star of guidance and of hope, to all who resist usurped authority. Hampden was a Puritan,—associate with Pym in the eloquence that swayed the Parliament and “fulmin’d” over England, comrade in arms with Cromwell, and shedding his blood upon the battle field.

But their preachers were cobblers and tinkers! Were they indeed? Well, and what were Christ’s apostles? One tinker I remember, among the preachers of that age, and of that great party—though not, in the most proper meaning of the word, a Puritan; and what name is more worthy of a place among the names of the elected fishermen of Galilee, than the name of Bunyan? That tinker, shut up in Bedford jail for the crime of preaching, saw there with the eye of faith and genius, visions only less divine than those which were revealed to his namesake in Patmos. His “Pilgrim’s Progress” lives in all the languages of Christendom, among the most immortal of the works of human genius. Would that all preachers were gifted like that tinker Bunyan!

But the Puritan preachers cannot be characterized as illiterate, or as men who had been trained to mechanical employments. They were men from the universi-

ties, skilled in the learning of the age, and well equipped for the work of preaching. Never has England seen a more illustrious company of preachers than when Baxter, Owen, Bates, Charnock, Howe, and two thousand others of inferior attainments indeed, but of kindred spirit, labored in the pulpits of the establishment. Never has any ministry in the Church of England done more, in the same time, and under similar disadvantages, for the advancement of the people in the knowledge of Christian truth, and in the practice of Christian piety, than was done by the ministry of the Puritans. Whence came the best and most famous of those books of devotion, and of experimental and practical piety, which have so enriched our language, and by which the authors preach to all generations. The "Saint's Rest," the "Call to the Unconverted," the "Blessedness of the Righteous," the "Living Temple," these, and other works like these, which have been the means of leading thousands to God the eternal fountain,—are the works of Puritan preachers.

Let me not be considered as maintaining that the Puritans were faultless and infallible. I know they had faults, great faults. I know they fell into serious errors. By their errors and faults, the great cause which their virtue so earnestly espoused, and their valor so strongly defended, was wrecked and almost ruined. But dearly did they pay, in disappointment, in persecution, in many sufferings, in the contempt which was heaped upon them by the infatuated people they had vainly struggled to emancipate,—the penalty of their faults and errors. And richly have their posterity, inhabiting both hemispheres, enjoyed, in well ordered liberty, in the diffusion of knowledge, and in the saving influences of pure Christianity,—the purchase of their sufferings, the reward of their virtues and their valor.

But aside from the constitution of their civil polity, and their relation to the Puritans of England, there are other topics of invective and ridicule against those venerable men who planted the New England colonies, some of which must be noticed, though with the utmost brevity.

Did these men believe in witchcraft? Certainly they did. Probably they never called in question for a moment, the then universal opinion of the reality of commerce between human beings and the invisible powers of darkness. And shall they be set down as weak and credulous, because they did not throw off all the errors of the age? Shall the age in which they lived be deemed an age of extraordinary credulity, because it did not rid itself of prejudices and terrors which had been growing in the world ever since the flood? Shall the age of animal magnetism and Maria Monk, take credit to itself because it does not believe in witchcraft?

But I am asked again, Did not these good fathers of ours inflict punishment on the Quakers? I answer, They did,—we admit their error, and condemn it. They did not understand aright the great principles of universal religious freedom. They came hither for their own freedom and peace; and that freedom and peace they thought themselves authorized and bound to defend against all invaders. The Quakers, however, whom they punished, were not a sect rising up on the soil of New England, and claiming simply the right of separate worship and free discussion. They were invaders who came from Old England to New, for the sole and declared purpose of disturbance and revolution. They came propagating principles which were understood to strike at the foundation not only of the particular religious and civil polity here established,

but of all order and of society itself. In their manner of proceeding they outraged peace and order, openly cursing and reviling the faith and worship which the New Englanders had come to the world's end to enjoy in quietness, the magistrates venerable for wisdom and public spirit, and the ministers whose gifts and faithfulness were esteemed the brightest glory of the land. They outraged the religious rights and freedom of those whom they came to enlighten, thrusting themselves into worshipping assemblies on the Lord's day and other occasions, and interrupting the worship or the sermon with their outcries of contradiction and cursing. They outraged natural decency itself; one of their women-preachers, Deborah Wilson by name, "went through the streets of Salem naked as she came into the world;"* and in other instances, they came in the same plight into the public religious assemblies;† and all to show by that sign the nakedness of other people's sins. I cannot doubt that such people—if indeed they were not too insane to be accountable for any thing—deserved to be punished, not for their opinions, but for their actions; not for their exercising their own rights, but for their invading the rights of others; not for their publication of offensive and even disorganizing doctrines, but for their outrages on decorum, and their disturbances of the public peace. If we condemn our fathers in this matter, it should be not because they punished such offenders, but because they punished them for heresy.

But let us compare the conduct of our ancestors in this very matter, with the conduct of some in our more enlightened and free thinking age. The real successors of the Quakers of that day—the men who come

* Hutchinson, I, 204.

† Mather, Magn., VII, 100.

nearest to those enthusiasts in their actual relations to the public—are not to be found in those orderly and thrifty citizens of Philadelphia, who are distinguished from their fellow citizens in Chestnut Street, by a little more circumference of the hat, and a little peculiarity of grammar, and perhaps a little more quietness and staidness of manner. What we call Quakers in this generation, are no more like George Fox in his suit of leather, than the pomp and riches of an English Archbishop are like the poverty of an Apostle. Do you find these men going about like mad men, reviling magistrates, and all in authority, cursing ministers, and publishing doctrines that strike at the existence of all government? No, if you would find the true successors of the Quakers of 1650, you must look elsewhere. The Anti-slavery agitators of our day, are extensively regarded very much as the Quakers were regarded by our ancestors. Some of them execrate our constitution and our laws, and revile our magistrates, and utter all manner of reproach against our ministers and our churches. Some of them go about preaching doctrines which tend not only to the extinction of the “peculiar institutions” of one part of our country, and the subversion of our “glorious union,” but to absolute and universal anarchy. We cannot indeed charge upon them every thing that was charged upon the ancient Quakers; Mr. Garrison himself has not yet put on the leather jerkin of George Fox; nor have we heard of his attempting, like Humphrey Norton, to break in with his ravings upon the solemn worship of a religious assembly on the Sabbath; nor has Miss Grimke, or Miss Abby Kelly, set herself to testify against the sins of the people, in just the same style with Deborah Wilson. But they have published

doctrines highly offensive to public opinion, and as is commonly believed highly dangerous to society; they have invaded Congress with their petitions; nay, it is even reported that they have been seen in public places, walking arm in arm with persons of African descent and complexion. And how are these men treated, in our age of toleration and free inquiry? How are they treated by those who are most fiercely liberal, in the condemnation of our ancestors, for persecuting the Quakers? The answer is found in the roar of mobs and the smoke of smouldering ruins—in presses violently suppressed—in the murder of editors, and the acquittal of the murderers by perjured jurymen. How are they treated in those enlightened regions of the Union, where Puritanism, Blue laws, and New England intolerance, are renounced most fervently and devoutly? Let one of these “pestilent fanatics” adventure on a mission to Mississippi or Virginia, and how much better does he fare than Humphrey Norton fared in Plymouth and New Haven?* The “little finger” of a Lynch committee, is “thicker than the loins” of a Puritan magistracy, against the fanatics that make war upon established opinions and cherished institutions.

What then is the chief difference between that age and the present, in respect to tolerance, in an extreme case like that of the Quakers? The difference is just this. Our ancestors made laws against the fanatics with whom they had to do, and boldly and manfully maintained those laws. The Quaker who suffered in New England, suffered the penalty of a known law, after a judicial conviction. In our day, on the other

* Kingsley, 99.

hand, laws to limit freedom of opinion and of discussion, are inconsistent with the enlightened and liberal maxims of government, that now so happily prevail; and therefore what the law cannot do, in that it is weak, must be done by the mob, without law and against law, in that high court of equity, where rage, more fanatical than any other fanaticism, is at once accuser, witness, judge, and executioner.

Another topic in the indictment against the founders of New England, is the character and influence of their ministers. The true answer to this is to be found in the entire civil and ecclesiastical history of New England. The History of the United States, now in progress, from the pen of one of the most accomplished scholars of New England, as by the beauty of its style, the philosophic reach of its views, and the epic unity into which the poetic mind of its author combines and blends its variegated materials, it makes its own way, where the humble but not less faithful chronicles of elder time have not been known,—will do much towards refuting the popular calumny. I hesitate not to say that no instance can be found in the history of man, in which the ministers of religion, as a body, have so completely and spontaneously denuded themselves of all power civil and ecclesiastical, as was done by the ministers of New England. They retained in their hands as ministers no power whatever but the power of their learning, their good sense, and their personal characters. If I had time to show you the full character of John Davenport, and the influence which he exerted in the colony of New Haven, I should have no need of any other argument. But as I cannot do this, you will allow me to give you from the records of New Haven, one scene of his history never yet published.

At a town-meeting,—or as it was called in those days, a general court for the town,—on the 28th of February, 1659, a request was made by the farmers of what is now East Haven and North Haven, for certain grants of land and privileges in order to the establishment of villages, so that they maintaining public worship and other town expenses by themselves, should not be taxed for such expenses in the town, and should have the power of taxing all the lands within their limits whether belonging to themselves or non-residents. The application was of course resisted on the ground that this setting off of new parishes would increase the town's taxes, and would diminish the ability of the people to support the ministry. It was obvious that the inhabitants of the town had an immediate pecuniary interest against the petition. The petitioners seem to have thought—reasonably enough—that by having such privileges and forming distinct parishes, each with a village at its center, they would not only be relieved from the very serious inconvenience of coming into town every Lord's day, and every training day or town meeting day; but would be able to give more value to their lands, and to get a more competent subsistence. The proposal seems to have been something like an effort on the part of a body of men of inferior condition, to obtain such a change as would put them more completely on a level with the merchants and capitalists of the town. In other words, it was what would now be called a movement of the democracy. One of the farmers said, "it was well known that at the first they were many of them looked upon as mean men to live by their labor; therefore they had at first small lots given them; but they finding by experience that they could not in that way maintain their families, they were put upon looking out."

On this occasion, Mr. Davenport took the lead in the discussion. He addressed the meeting immediately after the proposal had been stated; and in opposition to what most would regard as the town's pecuniary interest in the case, in opposition to the feeling, how shall the support of the ministry here be secured, and in opposition to the natural reluctance with which towns as well as individuals give up any particle of power, he argued strenuously for the extension of these privileges to the farmers. His arguments are so characteristic not only of his piety, but of his good sense and of his political wisdom, that they are worth repeating at length, as we find them on the records.

“The business they were exercised about being of great weight both for the honor of God and the good of posterity, he therefore desired that it might be weightily considered.

“If we look to God, it is that his kingdom may come and be set up among us, and that his will may be done. Now if we provide not for the sanctification of the Sabbath, the will of God will not be done. The law, he said, was expressed Levit. xxiii, 3, ‘Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, a holy convocation, ye shall do no work therein, it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.’ This law was not proper to the land of Canaan, but a brief repetition of the fourth commandment, which requires that we should sanctify the Sabbath as a day of holy rest. Now in this way of farms at such a distance, it cannot be kept as a holy convocation, and as a day of holy rest in all our dwellings. Therefore we shall live in the breach of the fourth commandment in this way.

“Besides, there are other things to be attended (as they ought to be) in a well ordered commonwealth;

particularly, to use all due means to prevent sin in others, which cannot be done in this way; for many great abominations may be committed, and bring the wrath of God on the plantation; like the secret fact of Achan,—for which, wrath came upon the whole congregation of Israel, because they used not what means they might to prevent it; therefore could they not prosper when they went against the men of Ai. Therefore, would we prosper, let us prevent sin what we can in the farms. If they were brought into a village form, there might be some officer to look to civil order. But that being not done, he saw not but that we are in continued danger of the wrath of God, because we do not what we may for the prevention of disorders that may fall out there.

“And besides this, we are to look to the good of posterity. Now it is a sad object to consider, how they are deprived of the means for the education of their children. But if they were reduced to villages, they might then have one to teach their children.

“Mr. Davenport farther said, Let there be no divisions or contentions among you. But let every one, with some self-denial, set himself to further the work so as may be for the good both of the town and the farms. He said he sought not the destruction of the town or farms. But in his judgment, he thought, if the town fall into a way of trade, then the villages might be helpful to the town, and the town to the villages. And if the town did not consider of some way to further trade [that is, not only buying and selling, but the production of commodities to be bought and sold,] how they would subsist he saw not. He further said, he did like it well that there had been some consultation about a mill,”—which—“if God prosper it, may be a furtherance of

trade. And if it please God to bless the iron work, that may be also a foundation for trade. Now put all these together ;—the town falling into a way of trade will be in a better state, and the villages accommodated ; and the honor of God in the sanctification of the Sabbath and the upholding of civil order will be provided for.

“Mr. Davenport farther said, that he looked upon it as a merciful hand of God that his wrath hath not broke out against us more than it hath, when sin hath not been prevented at the farms as it might have been. Let us now, said he, set our thoughts a-work how the kingdom of Christ may be settled among us, and that the will of God may be done in the sanctification of the Sabbath, by reducing the farms into villages. But herein we must go above sense and reason. Lay this foundation, Doth God require it ? If he doth, then here we must exercise faith ; as the Jews,—how they should be supplied, being God had commanded that every seventh year their land should rest,—and for safety, when at the commandment of God all their males must thrice in a year appear before the Lord at Jerusalem. Yet we must make use of reason and understanding that it may be done in such a way as may be for the good both of the town and of the farms. And the Lord guide you in it.”

By this argument of Mr. Davenport's, the subject was introduced, and the discussion opened. All the veneration with which the people regarded their pastor did not prevent the free expression of objections. Among others, Sergeant Jeffries, while he professed himself “marvellous willing the villages should go on,” thought it was “to be considered whether villages will not wrong the town much,” and suggested, furthermore, “that the ministry of the colony was much un-

settled,* which is a great discouragement to such a work." "To which Mr. Davenport answered, that Christ holds the stars in his right hand, and disposes of them as seems good to him. But this we must know, that if we obey not the voice of the prophets, God will take away the prophets. He further said, If we build God's house, God will build our house. He exhorted to consider whether it be our duty or not, and said that unless we look upon it as a duty, he would never advise to go about villages, nor any thing else of that nature."

All this, I say, shows us the character of the first New England pastors, and the sort of influence which they exerted in the community. Davenport's great concern was, indeed, that Christ's kingdom might be set up, that God's will might be done, and that to this all the arrangements of the commonwealth might tend. Sin, which when not duly restrained, brings God's wrath upon communities as upon individuals, was that which of all things he most feared. But his views did not begin and end with these two points. To him the good of posterity as dependent on education, was the greatest of public interests. The thought that any of the people were deprived of means for the education of their children, affected him with sadness. His influence made men feel that the surest way to prosper, was to be ever doing God's work, and to have all our interests identified with the prosperity of the kingdom of God. Yet his piety was not inconsistent with the most sagacious policy. Even when he would have men "go above sense and reason," and "exercise faith," he would nevertheless have them "make use of reason and un-

* This was in February, 1659. The Church in Milford was then vacant by the death of Mr. Prudden, in 1656. Mr. Higginson left Guilford in 1659.

derstanding" to ascertain and promote the public welfare. His comprehensive mind, which his piety enlarged instead of contracting, formed in itself the idea which New England now exhibits every where in the happy reality ; manufacturing and commercial towns upon the bays and rivers ; rural municipalities filling the country around ; and town and country each free from subjection to the other, yet mutually dependent, ministering to each other's prosperity.

To the stranger passing through New England, and becoming acquainted with the peculiarities of our social condition and of our civil polity, nothing is more striking, or more admirable, than the continual succession of villages, each with its neat white spire, its school houses, its clusters of comfortable dwellings, its own municipal rights and regulations, and each vieing with its neighbor villages in order, thrift, and beauty. In other parts of the country, where New England influence not having predominated at the beginning, the forms of society are not molded after ours, you see a succession of broad farms, with many a pleasing indication of prosperous industry ; but the villages are only at the "county seat," or where the exigencies of business create them. New England is a land of villages, not of manufacturing villages merely, or trading villages, but of villages formed for society, villages in each of which the meeting house is the acropolis. The reasons of this peculiarity appear from that argument of Mr. Davenport's which I have just recited. These villages were created—not as many have supposed, for defense alone, else why did not the same reason cause villages in Pennsylvania and Virginia—but first that the worship of God might be maintained, and his Sabbaths be duly honored ; secondly, that the people might have

schools for all their children; thirdly, that they might maintain among themselves the most efficient civil order; and fourthly, that instead of living, each planter in solitary independence, they might live in mutual dependence and mutual helpfulness, and might thus develop more rapidly and effectually the natural resources of the country.

It is always easy to detract from greatness and from goodness; for the greatest minds are not exempt from infirmity, and the purest and noblest bear some stain of human imperfection. Let others find fault with the founders of the New England colonies, because they were not more than human; be it ours to honor them. We have no occasion to disparage the wisdom or the virtues of the lawgivers of other states and nations; nor need the admirers of Calvert or of Penn detract from the wisdom, the valor, or the devotion of the fathers of New England. Not to Winthrop and Cotton, nor to Eaton and Davenport, nor yet to Bradford and Brewster, belongs the glory of demonstrating with how little government society can be kept together, and men's lives and property be safe from violence. That glory belongs to Roger Williams; and to him belongs also the better glory of striking out and maintaining, with the enthusiasm though not without something of the extravagance of genius, the great conception of a perfect religious liberty. New England has learned to honor the name of Williams as one of the most illustrious in her records; and his principle of unlimited religious freedom, is now incorporated into the being of all her commonwealths. To Penn belongs the glory of having first opened in this land a free and broad asylum for men of every faith and every lineage. To him due honor is conceded; and America, still receiv-

ing into her "broad-armed ports," and enrolling among her own citizens, the thousands that come not only from the British Isles, but from the Alps, and from the Rhine, and from the bloody soil of Poland,—glories in his spreading renown. What then do we claim for the Pilgrims of Plymouth—what for the stern old Puritans of the Bay and of Connecticut—what for the founders of New Haven? Nothing, but that you look with candor on what they have done for their posterity and for the world. Their labors, their principles, their institutions, have made New England, with its hard soil and its cold, long winters, "the glory of all lands." The thousand towns and villages,—the decent sanctuaries not for show but for use, crowning the hill-tops, or peering out from the valleys,—the means of education accessible to every family—the universal diffusion of knowledge—the order and thrift, the general activity and enterprise, the unparalleled equality in the distribution of property, the general happiness, resulting from the diffusion of education and of pure religious doctrine,—the safety in which more than half the population sleep nightly with unbolted doors,—the calm, holy Sabbaths, when mute nature in the general silence becomes vocal with praise, when the whisper of the breeze seems more distinct, the distant water-fall louder and more musical, the carol of the morning birds, clearer and sweeter,—this is New England; and where will you find the like, save where you find the operation of New England principles and New England influence? This is the work of our fathers and ancient lawgivers. They came hither, not with new theories of government from the laboratories of political alchymists, not to try wild experiments upon human nature, but only to found a new empire for God, for truth, for virtue, for freedom guard-

ed and bounded by justice. To have failed in such an attempt had been glorious. Their glory is that they succeeded.

In founding their commonwealths, their highest aim was the glory of God in "the common welfare of all." Never before, save when God brought Israel out of Egypt, had any government been instituted with such an aim. They had no model before them, and no guidance save the principles of truth and righteousness embodied in the word of God, and the wisdom which he giveth liberally to them that ask him. They thought that their end, "the common welfare of all," was to be secured by founding pure and free Churches, by providing the means of universal education, and by laws maintaining perfect justice, which is the only perfect liberty. "The common welfare of all," said Davenport, is that "whereunto all men are bound principally to attend in laying the foundation of a commonwealth, lest posterity rue the first miscarriages when it will be too late to redress them. They that are skillful in architecture observe, that the breaking or yielding of a stone in the groundwork of a building, but the breadth of the back of a knife, will make a cleft of more than half a foot in the fabric aloft. So important, saith mine author, are fundamental errors. The Lord awaken us to look to it in time, and send us his light and truth to lead us into the safest ways in these beginnings."*

Not in vain did that prayer go up to heaven. Light and truth were sent; and posterity has had no occasion to rue the miscarriages of those who laid the "groundwork" of New England. On their foundations has arisen a holy structure. Prayers, toils, tears, sacrifices,

* Discourse upon Civil Government, 14.

and precious blood, have hallowed it. No unseemly fissures deforming "the fabric aloft," dishonor its founders. Convulsions that have rocked the world, have not moved it. When terror has seized the nations, and the faces of kings have turned pale at the footsteps of Almighty wrath, peace has been within its walls, and still the pure incense has been fragrant at its altar. Wise master-builders were they who laid the foundations. They built for eternity.

As we trace our history from one period of distress and conflict to another, the thought is continually presenting itself, How great the expense at which our privileges have been obtained for us! We dwell in peace and perfect safety. The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places. Beauty, comfort, light, joy, are all around us. The poorest man among us, has within his reach, immunities and blessings without number, means of improvement and means of enjoyment, to which the far greater portion of mankind, even in the most favored communities, have hitherto been strangers. And how little of this has been obtained by any effort or any sacrifice of ours. We have entered into other men's labors. We are enjoying the results of their agonies, and the answer to their prayers. They subdued the wilderness, and planted a land not sown; that we might dwell in a land adorned with culture, and enriched with the products of industry and art. They traversed with weary steps the pathless woods, where the wild beast growled upon them from his lair; that we might travel upon roads of iron, and borne by powers of which they never dreamed, might leave the winds behind us as we go. They encountered all that is terrible in savage war, and shed their blood in swamps and forests; that we might live in this security. They, with anxiety that

never rested, and with many a stroke of vigilant or daring policy, baffled the machinations of the enemies who sought to reduce them to a servile dependence on the crown; that we might enjoy this popular government, these equal laws, this perfect liberty. They came to the world's end, away from schools and libraries, and all the fountains of light in the old world; that we and our children might inhabit a land, glorious with the universal diffusion of knowledge. They were exiles for truth and purity, they like their Savior, were tempted in the wilderness; that the truth might make us free, and that the richest blessing of their covenant God might come on their posterity. All that there is in our lot for which to be grateful, we owe, under God, to those who here have labored, and prayed, and suffered for us.

So it is every where. While every man is in one view the arbiter of his own destiny, the author of his own weal or woe; in another view, equally true and equally important, every man's lot is determined by others. Every where in this world, you see the principle of vicarious action and vicarious suffering. No being under the government of God, exists for himself alone; and in this world of conflict and of change, where evermore one generation passeth away and another generation cometh, the greatest toil of each successive age is to provide for its successors. Thus, by the very constitution and conditions of our existence here, does our Creator teach us to rise above the narrow views and aims of selfishness, and to find our happiness in seeking the happiness of others. Such is God's plan,—such are the relations by which he connects us with the past and with the future, as well as with our fellow actors in the passing scene; and the

mind which by the grace of the gospel has been renewed to a participation "of the Divine nature," throws itself spontaneously into God's plan, and learns the meaning of that motto, "None of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself." Such a mind, created anew in Christ, and knowing him and the power of his resurrection, knows also the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. In this spirit an apostle exclaimed, "I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ."

Look about you now, and compute if you can, how much you are enjoying of the purchase of other men's toils, the results of their patience and steadfastness, and the answer to their prayers. The debt is infinite. All that you can do to discharge it, is to stand in your lot, for truth, for freedom, for virtue, and "for the good of posterity."

ODE,

BY WILLIAM C. BRYANT.

WILD was the day, the wintry sea
Moaned sadly on New England's strand,
When first the thoughtful and the free,
Our fathers, trod the desert land.

They little thought how pure a light,
In time, should gather round that day :
How love should keep their memory bright ;
How wide a realm their sons should sway.

Green are their bays, but greener still,
Shall round their *spreading fame* be wreathed ;
And regions, *now untrod*, shall thrill
With reverence when their names are breathed :

Till where the sun, with softer fires,
Looks on the vast Pacific's sleep,
The children of the Pilgrim Sires,
This hallowed day, like us, shall keep.

NOV 25 1929

LEDOX LIBRARY



Bancroft Collection.
Purchased in 1893.

